

“Today I am a Fountain Pen”

From The Educator

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On Friday night, September 13, sometime in the distant past, I became a bat mitzvah. I led most of the service,

Passover when our beginning Hebrew students tell us their grandparents heard them chant the 4 Questions for the first time. With all of this, we understand *m'dor l'dor* to mean from an older generation to a younger generation.

but I do not remember chanting Torah or Haftarah. I DO remember having my short hair teased to within an inch of its life, and the giant black velvet bow firmly pinned to the back of my head to match the custom-made black velvet dress, and the party after in our large back yard, fairy lights in all the trees and lining the steps down from the house. As with other things from my childhood, I wish I had known to pay attention to everything, not just the décor.

What I do have is this photo showing **three** generations of women before me – my mother, her mother, and HER mother – were present.

At BHSS when we say *m'dor l'dor*, the Hebrew for “from generation to generation,” we mean it. The school’s mission statement includes the following: “We aim to enable families to pass their traditions “from generation to generation...”

We hope you see it in our Family School, where two and sometimes three generations learn together, or at a Saturday morning service when a tallit is presented, or at

Barbara: “When I was 10 years old, I began preparing for my bat mitzvah...but life had other plans – my mother passed away soon thereafter...my journey was paused... And yet, here I am today at 81...continuing what I had started so long ago...If there’s one thing I learned, it’s this: Life doesn’t always follow the timeline we expect – but that doesn’t mean the story is over – sometimes it’s just waiting for the right moment to continue.”

Michelle: “When my three daughters were practicing for their Bat Mitzvahs...I had no idea what they were saying and if they were mispronouncing words. I was at a complete disadvantage.... We are supposed to know ALL and I knew very little... I decided it was finally my turn...when I first started learning Hebrew two years ago, there were moments I wanted to quit... I stuck with it... and that brings me here today.”

Jana: “Watching my son learn and grow stirred something in me...And for the first time, I asked myself a question I had avoided for years: How can I guide my children down a path I never finished myself? The truth is, my time simply wasn’t when I was 13... What I didn’t do then, I was finally ready to do now — as an adult, as a mom, and as someone who wanted to walk this path... not just beside them.”

Lisa: “This group became the female empowerment space I didn’t know I needed. While I was being told ‘no’ in the boardroom, this community was saying ‘yes.’ We were four women from different stages of life, led by two brilliant female mentors. This process wasn’t just homework; it was grounding... I am walking away from this experience rooted in my faith and certain of my value. There is a beautiful energy in this room today, support for my journey that doesn’t need words, just presence.”

Every two years or so, a parent or grandparent generation turns this on its head and honors us with celebrating bar or bat mitzvah as adults - some because their own childhood service did not allow Torah chanting, and some because circumstances in their lives did not allow for this at age 13. On Saturday morning, April 11 at BHSS the adult b’not mitzvah group was a mix like that - all four women learned or polished up their Hebrew and prayers, all four chanted Torah and Haftarah, all four spoke about their Jewish journeys, and all four were nervous!

Our entire BHSS b’nai mitzvah team – Rabbi Ilana and I, Iris and Michelle – are so very proud of Jana DeFrino, Lisa Freedland, Michelle Gilbert, and Barbara Heitmann, each accomplished adults on their own, and now with another important milestone reached. I share here an excerpt of each of their remarks. Please congratulate them when you see them, and tell us if you would like to know more about how YOU too can perhaps fulfill a dream you did not even realize you had!